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ABSTRACT

The policy on incomplete grades at California's College of the Canyons states that incompletes may only be given under circumstances beyond students' control and that students must make arrangements with faculty prior to the end of the semester to clear the incomplete. Failure to complete an incomplete may result in an "F" grade. While incompletes represent less than 1% of the over 16,000 grades awarded each semester at the college, they can play an important role in students' academic histories. An analysis of the incomplete grades awarded at the college between fall 1992 and summer 1994 reveals the following: (1) over the period, 625 incompletes were awarded at the college, with the highest numbers awarded in fall 1993 (n=189) and spring 1994 (n=157); (2) in fall 1993, 169 students received 1 incomplete, 17 students received 2, and 3 students received 3; (3) over the period, less than 30% of the students successfully completed their incomplete with a passing grade; and (4) students who successfully completed their work had a median grade point average (GPA) of 2.88, while students who did not had a median GPA of 1.81. Based on the analysis, it appears than students and faculty are following the intent and spirit of the college's incomplete grade policy. (HAA)

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ED 401 972

Matriculation Research Report:

Incomplete Grades; Data & Analysis

by

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June 1995

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JC 970 008

While incompletes are less than one percent of the over 16,000 grades awarded each semester , they can play an important role in students academic history. Our current policy states:

> "The grade of incomplete is given only in cases of emergency and when the student is unable to complete the course due to circumstances beyond his/her control usually during the final weeks of the course. Arrangements to receive an INC must be made with the instructor before the course ends.
>
> To clear an INC grade a student must make arrangements with the instructor to make up the grade prior to the end of the ensuing semester in which the incomplete was given. Failure to clear an INC grade will result in a grade by the instructor given in lieu of completion of the course and could result in an F grade being assigned. An incomplete grade cannot be changed to a W or to NC.".
>
> COC Catalog, 1994-95

The purpose of this paper is to provide data and analysis on incomplete grades. Of particular interest are: What percent of students who receive INC grades turn in the necessary work?, What factor(s) are correlated with successfully completing an incomplete grade?, If a student receives one incomplete are they likely to receive another?, and Is the current policy on incomplete grades being followed?

Data on Incomplete Grades

On the next page Table 1 lists the number and results of incomplete grades for each, semester beginning Fall, 1992 through Summer, 1994.

Table 1
Number of Incompletes and Final Grades Awarded

	Number of Inc	A,B,C	D	F,NC	W
Fall 92	110	34	18	54	4
Spring 93	135	37	17	78	3
Summer 93	11	5	2	4	0
Fall 93	189	77	23	85	4
Spring 94	157	48	25	80	4
Summer 94	23	11	4	6	2
Totals	**625**	**212**	**89**	**307**	**17**
(percent)		**34%**	**14%**	**49%**	**3%**

Less than 30% successfully completed their INC grade with a passing grade (25 of the grades were IC which the students did not turn in work but ended up with a grade of C).

Table 2
Number of Incompletes An Individual Student Received

	Number of Incompletes one	two	three
Fall 92	99	9	2
Spring 93	123	10	2
Summer 93	11	0	0
Fall 93	169	17	3
Spring 94	142	14	1
Summer 94	20	3	0
Totals	**564**	**53**	**8**
Percent	**90%**	**9%**	**1%**

Each semester less than 1% (7 out of 1000) of the grades are incompletes. The vast majority of students who receive an INC grade, receive only one incomplete grade.

Table 3

Student GPA, Units Attempted, Course, Final Grade

Student #	GPA	Units Attempted	Course	Final Grade
Successful Students				
Student 1	2.56	59	Math 103	B
Student 2	3.62	57	French 100 &101	A, C
Student 3	3.63	42	Eng 101 & Hist 150	A, B
Student 4	2.88	12	French 100 & 101	B, D
Student 5	2.31	42	Eng 101	C
Student 6	2.26	27	Hist 150	A
Student 7	3.86	7	Bus 50	A
Student 8	2.80	76	Art 113	A
Student 9	2.89	43	Speech 225	A
Student 10	2.87	29	Eco 201	B
Unsuccessful Students				
Student 11	2.51	37	Eng 90 & Math 130	NC, F
Student 12	.75	12	Math 103 & 211	F, F
Student 13	3.23	70	Eng 135	F
Student 14	1.21	55	Bio 204 & Eng 105	F, F
Student 15	1.31	82	Math 60	F
Student 16	3.89	54	Eng 80	F
Student 17	2.33	12	Eng 101	F
Student 18	2.00	12	Eco 202	F
Student 19	1.61	31	Pol Sci 150	F
Student 20	.17	18	Anth 101 & Geo 106	F, F

Students who successfully completed their work have a median GPA of 2.88, those who were unsuccessful have a median GPA of 1.81. As with most predictors of this sort, it is easier to predict failure than success.

The reason stated on the form for needing an incomplete are primarily to complete the final exam, paper, or project. There was great variation on teachers allowing students the option of an incomplete grade. Seven faculty accounted for 44 of 121 (36%) incompletes awarded Fall 1994. In most other cases, no faculty gave more than two incompletes.

Discussion

Incomplete grades make up a very small percentage of the grades awarded at the College. It appears that students and faculty are following both the intent and spirit of incomplete grade policy. Students who have an above average GPA are more likely to successfully complete the course. No recommendations are forwarded.